

IN THE CLAIMS:

The following is a complete listing of the claims, reflects all changes currently being made, and replaces all earlier versions and listings:

Claims 1 - 12. (Canceled)

Claim 13. (New) An information processing apparatus which can communicate via a network with an external information processing apparatus which issues a disconnection notification based on disconnection from the network, the information processing apparatus comprising:

managing means for managing fixed identification information added to the external information processing apparatus and variable identification information added to the external information processing apparatus;

obtaining means for obtaining the fixed identification information and the variable identification information from the external information processing apparatus;

discriminating means for discriminating whether the variable identification information obtained by said obtaining means coincides with the variable identification information managed by said managing means and whether the fixed identification information obtained by said obtaining means coincides with the fixed identification information managed by said managing means; and

searching means for performing a search request for the external information processing apparatus if said discriminating means determines that, although the variable identification information obtained by said obtaining means coincides with the variable identification information managed by said managing means, the fixed identification information obtained by said obtaining means does not coincide with the fixed identification information managed by said managing means.

Claim 14. (New) The information processing apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein:

said obtaining means repetitively obtains fixed identification information and variable identification information corresponding to the external information processing apparatus, which is capable of connecting to the network, from the network; and

said discriminating means performs discrimination in response to implementation of obtainment by said obtaining means.

Claim 15. (New) The information processing apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein:

said managing means manages, in the form of a list, the fixed identification information and variable identification information of the external information processing apparatus, which is capable of communication via the network; and

said discriminating means performs the discrimination by discriminating whether or not the variable identification information and fixed identification information obtained by said obtaining means exist in the list in response to the obtainment of the fixed identification information and variable identification information of the external information processing apparatus by said obtaining means.

Claim 16. (New) The information processing apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said searching means includes storing means for receiving and storing, and for updating, external information processing apparatus information from the external information processing apparatus on the network.

Claim 17. (New) The information processing apparatus according to Claim 1, further comprising deleting means which, when said searching means searches for the

external information processing apparatus and no response is received from the external information processing apparatus, deletes a device driver stored in the information processing apparatus, from which no response is received.

Claim 18. (New) An information processing method for an information processing apparatus which can communicate via a network with an external information processing apparatus which issues a disconnection notification based on disconnection from the network, the information processing method comprising:

a managing step of managing fixed identification information added to the external information processing apparatus and variable identification information added to the external information processing apparatus;

an obtaining step of obtaining the fixed identification information and the variable identification information via the network from the external information processing apparatus;

a discriminating step of discriminating whether the variable identification information obtained in said obtaining step coincides with the variable identification information managed in said managing step and whether the fixed identification information obtained in said obtaining step coincides with the fixed identification information managed in said managing step; and

a searching step of performing a search request for the external information processing apparatus on the network if it is determined in said discriminating step that, although the variable identification information obtained in said obtaining step coincides with the variable identification information managed in said managing step, the fixed identification information obtained in said obtaining step does not coincide with the fixed identification information managed in said managing step.

Claim 19. (New) The information processing method according to Claim 6, wherein:

in said obtaining step, fixed identification information and variable identification information corresponding to the external information processing apparatus, which is capable of connecting to the network, are repetitively obtained from the network; and

discrimination is performed in said discriminating step in response to implementation of obtainment in said obtaining step.

Claim 20. (New) The information processing method according to Claim 6, wherein:

in said managing step, the fixed identification information and variable identification information of the external information processing apparatus, which is capable of communication via the network, are managed in the form of a list; and

the discrimination is performed in said discriminating step by discriminating whether or not the variable identification information and fixed identification information obtained in the obtaining step exist in the list in response to the obtainment of the fixed identification information and variable identification information of the external information processing apparatus in said obtaining step.

Claim 21. (New) The information processing method according to Claim 8, wherein said searching step includes a storing step of receiving and storing, and for updating, external information processing apparatus information from the external information processing apparatus on the network.

Claim 22. (New) The information processing apparatus according Claim 6, further comprising a deleting step of, when, in said searching step, the external information processing apparatus is searched for and no response is received from the external information processing apparatus, deleting a device driver stored in an information processing apparatus from which no response is received.

Claim 23. (New) A control program stored a computer readable medium for allowing a computer to execute the methods in Claims 6 .